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Disarthricerus dulcissimus sp. nov. (Coleoptera, Staphylinidae, Pselaphinae): a precious dwarf from the north

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Abstract

The rare and enigmatic ant-like litter beetle genus *Disarthricerus* Raffray, 1895 (Pselaphinae, Clavigeritae, Disarthricerini) comprises three species distributed across the southern Malay Peninsula and northern Borneo. Herein, a fourth member, *D. dulcissimus* **sp. nov.**, is described from Yunnan, southwest China, which extends the known range of the genus northward by more than 2,100 kilometers. Scanning electron micrographs of the cephalic structures and illustrations of the aedeagus for the type species, *D. integer* Raffray, 1895, are provided for the first time. To facilitate future studies, a summary of existing knowledge of *Disarthricerus* and a key for the identification of all four species are also presented.

Key Words

China, Clavigeritae, Disarthricerini, *Disarthricerus*, distribution, myrmecophily, taxonomy

Introduction

With a distinctive habitus that is intriguing even to specialists familiar with the vast morphological diversity of the Pselaphinae, the genus *Disarthricerus* Raffray, 1895 has long represented an enigmatic group of myrmecophilous ant-like litter beetles. Characterized by a stout body with remarkably reduced antennae, *Disarthricerus* was historically the sole member of its tribe or subtribe (Jeannel 1949; Besuchet 1991; Hlaváč et al. 2021), a status that changed only with the recent inclusion of *Kurbatoviella* Hlaváč, 2010, from Borneo (Hlaváč 2010). In his revision of the pselaphine fauna of Singapore and Penang (Raffray 1894, 1895), Raffray established the genus for the type species *D. integer* Raffray, 1895, based on a single female specimen procured from a sifted leaf litter sample. He noted two key characters that distinguish *Disarthricerus* from most other clavigerites: the absence of trichomes on the elytra and abdomen, which are specialized glandular hair tufts common in other clavigerite groups, and the unique antennae, which have rounded apices that lack typical setose cavities.

For more than a century, the genus remained exceptionally rare in collections. A second species, *D. moultoni* Bryant, 1915, was described from Mount Matang, Sarawak, in northern Borneo (Bryant 1915). This discovery provided the sole biological information for the genus: one specimen was found in a nest of the ant *Prenolepis* (*Nylanderia*) *butteli* Forel, 1913 (now *Paraparatrechina butteli*). Following these early works, the genus received little attention until Nomura (2005, 2012) reported new faunistic records for *D. integer* from Pahang and *D. moultoni* in Sabah, Malaysia. A third species, *D. bruneicus* Nakládal & Hlaváč, 2018, was described from material

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collected by a light trap in Brunei (Nakládal and Hlaváč 2018). Hitherto, the known biogeographical range of these three species was confined to the southern Malay Peninsula (Singapore; Malaysia: Pahang) and northern Borneo (Malaysia: Sarawak and Sabah; Brunei). Each species is known from fewer than three specimens, indicating their scarcity and the gaps in our knowledge of the diversity and life history of the genus.

A recent field survey conducted by one of us (LL) in the Xishuangbanna region of Yunnan, southwest China, yielded two male adults of *Disarthricerus*, collected by flight intercept traps deployed in mixed broad-leaved forests. These specimens represent a fourth, new species of the genus, which is described herein. Notably, the find also constitutes a significant northward extension of the known range of *Disarthricerus* by more than 2,100 kilometers.

Materials and methods

The material examined in this study is deposited in the Muséum d'Histoire Naturelle, Geneva, Switzerland (MHNG); the National Museum of Nature and Science, Tsukuba, Japan (NSMT); the Insect Collection of Shanghai Normal University, Shanghai, China (SNUC); and the private collection of Peter Hlaváč, Prague, Czech Republic (pcPH).

Label data are quoted verbatim. Dissected parts were mounted in Euparal on plastic slides and pinned with the specimen. Habitus images were captured using a Canon EOS R5 camera equipped with a 20× Mitutoyo M Plan Apo lens, illuminated by three 10 W LED bulbs (5500 K), or using a Canon MP-E 65 mm f/2.8 1–5× Macro Lens with a Canon MT-24EX Macro Twin Lite Flash. Images of morphological details were produced using a Canon G9 camera mounted to an Olympus CX31 microscope under reflected or transmitted light. Image stacking was performed using Helicon Focus v. 8.2.0 Pro, and all images were edited and compiled into plates using Adobe Photoshop CC 2020. Structural highlights of the antenna and aedeagus were added using Adobe Illustrator 27.3.1. For scanning electron microscopy (SEM), the specimen was air dried, left uncoated, and examined under a low accelerating voltage (1.0 kV) with a JEOL JSM-6380LV scanning electron microscope.

Measurements were taken as follows: total body length from the anterior margin of the clypeus to the apex of the abdomen; head length from the anterior margin of the clypeus to the head base, excluding the cervical constriction; head width across the eyes; pronotal length along the midline; pronotal width at its maximum; elytral length along the suture; elytral width at their maximum across both elytra; abdominal length of the dorsally exposed part along its midline; and abdominal width at its maximum. Terminology follows Chandler (2001) and Yin (2022). Abdominal tergites and sternites are numbered in Arabic numerals (starting from the first visible segment) and Roman numerals (reflecting true morphological position), for example, tergite 1 (IV) or sternite 1 (III). Paired appendages in the description are treated as singular.

Declaration of generative AI

During the preparation of this work, the authors used Gemini 3 Pro (Google) exclusively for linguistic refinement, spelling and formatting checks, and improving the readability of the English text. The authors affirm that this AI tool was not involved in the generation of scientific data, the interpretation of morphological characters, or the formulation of taxonomic decisions (e.g., diagnoses and descriptions). The authors carefully reviewed all AI-suggested edits and retain full intellectual property rights and responsibility for the scientific content, integrity, and accuracy of the publication.

Taxonomy

Family Staphylinidae Latreille, 1802
Subfamily Pselaphinae Latreille, 1802
Supertribe Clavigeritae Leach, 1815
Tribe Disarthricerini Jeannel, 1949

Genus *Disarthricerus* Raffray, 1895

Type species. *Disarthricerus integer* Raffray; by original designation.

Disarthricerus dulcissimus Yin, Nomura, Hlaváč & Lü, sp. nov.

https://zoobank.org/3CB9C15C-98A4-4194-B147-A7247D270B4D

Figs 1, 3

Chinese common name: 奇珍羔蚁甲

Type material. ***Holotype*: China:** • ♂, 'China: Yunnan, Xishuangbanna, Mengla County, Menglun Town, Mangang Mt., 21.951368°N, 101.258613°E, alt. 640 m, 8–10.v.2025, FIT, L. Lü leg., 云南勐腊勐仑曼冈山飞阻吕亮采' (SNUC). ***Paratype*: China:** • 1 ♂, also from Menglun, same collector and method, except 'Namiao River (那苗河), 21.929558°N, 101.192047°E, alt. 710 m, 13–16.v.2025' (SNUC).

Diagnosis. Male. Habitus rather stout, with short antennae and legs. Body length approximately 1.1 mm. Eyes small (compared to congeners), broadly separated; antenna with two observable antennomeres; terminal antennomere nearly straight, dorsally exposed part approximately 3.6× as long as wide. Pronotum with sparse, distinct punctures. Elytra reticulate at center of disc. Legs simple, lacking modifications. Composite tergite (IV–VI) of abdomen laterally with pair of oblique, longitudinal cavities. Sternite 2 (IV) with complete lateral carinae. Aedeagus elongate, dorsoventrally symmetric; apex of median lobe narrowed, curved ventrally; parameres dorsally fused with median lobe, elongate and slender, with rounded, asetose apices. Female. Unknown.

Description. Male. Body (Fig. 1A) stout; length 1.08–1.12 mm; colour reddish brown, with paler tarsi and mouthparts. Dorsal vestiture consists of sparse, suberect golden setae.

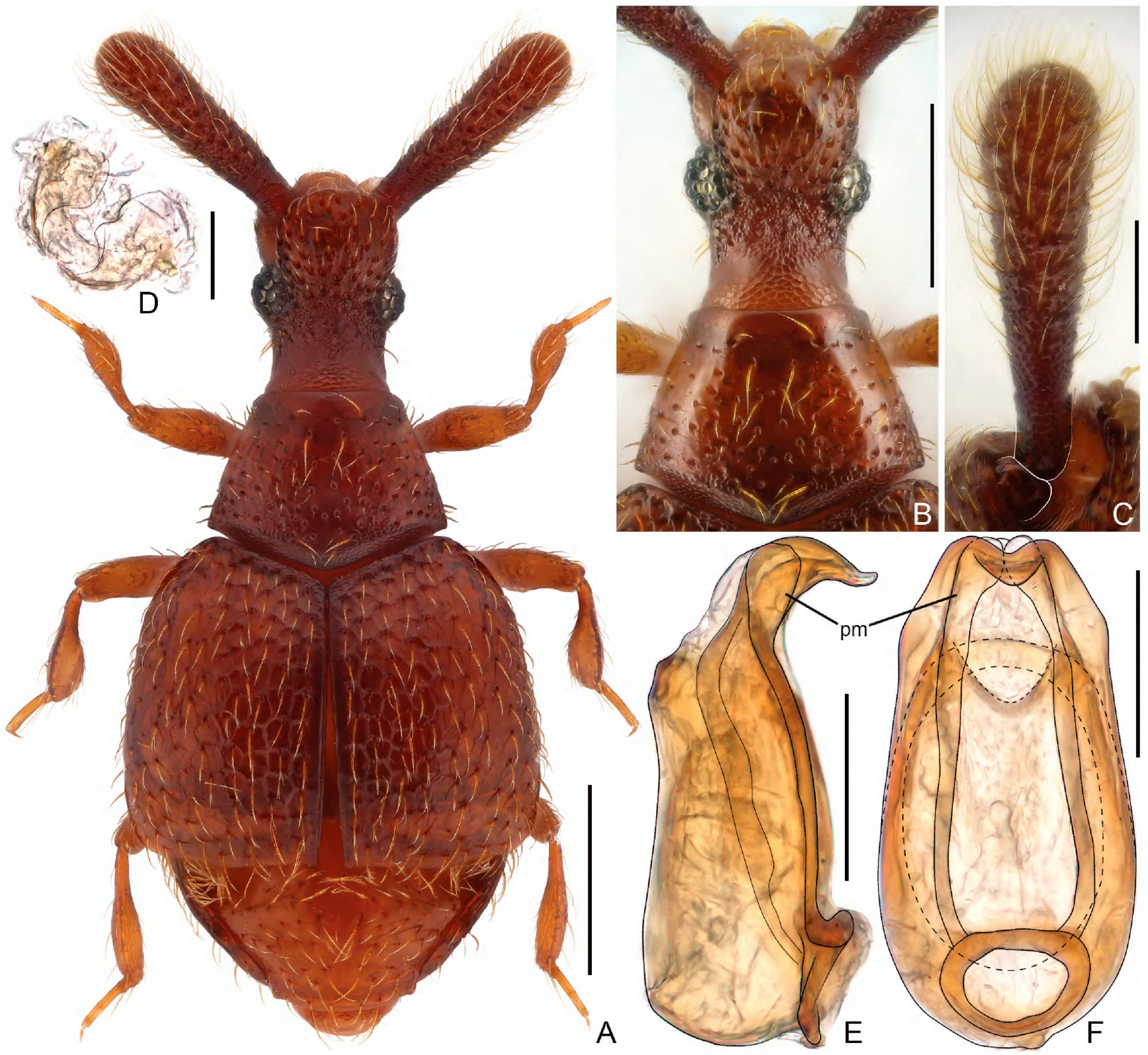

Figure 1. *Disarthricerus dulcissimus* sp. nov., male. **A.** Dorsal habitus; **B.** Head and pronotum; **C.** Antenna, lateral; **D.** Presumed sternite 7 (IX); **E, F.** Aedeagus, lateral (**E**) and ventral (**F**). Scale bars: 0.2 mm (**A, B**); 0.1 mm (**C**); 0.05 mm (**D–F**).

Head capsule (Fig. 1B) dorsally subcylindrical, significantly longer than wide, length 0.30 mm, width across eyes 0.21 mm; vertex depressed at level of posterior margin of eyes, with coarse surface, lacking foveae (dorsal tentorial pits); frons with sparse, large punctures, evenly elevates to form broad rostrum, which then descends sharply and features vertical, anteriorly divergent keel at middle; clypeus markedly short, small, with sparse setae on its anterior margin. Venter with reticulate surface; gular region broadly, moderately impressed, with single small pit containing tiny foveae (posterior tentorial pits); lacking median longitudinal carina. Compound eyes moderately prominent, each having approximately 32 ommatidia. Head capsule slightly expanded posteriorly, not separated from 'neck' region, surface of cervical part with reticulate microsculpture especially distinct at middle. Antenna (Fig. 1C) 0.32 mm long, with two observable antennomeres and lacking modifications; antennomere 1 short, transverse, dorsally invisible as completely hidden beneath rostrum; terminal antennomere elongate, with dorsally visible part approximately 3.6× as long as wide, broadened slightly toward rounded apex; few indistinct sutures at basal portion suggest fusion of apical antennomeres.

Pronotum (Fig. 1B) pentagonal, wider than long, length 0.23–0.24 mm, width 0.31–0.32 mm, widest at its posterior angles; anterior margin broadly, slightly impressed medially; lateral margins nearly straight, divergent posteriorly; posterior margin convex, obtusely angled at middle; disc weakly impressed mediobasally, with sparse, large punctures, lacking foveae. Prosternum with basisternal (precoxal) portion much longer than procoxal rests; with tiny, well-separated procoxal foveae. Hypomera largely fused with prosternum, lacking hypomeral grooves; hypomeral carinae weakly prominent, clinging to lateral edges of coxal cavities.

Elytra together broadly transverse, sub-rectangular, length 0.36–0.37 mm, width 0.54 mm; anterior margins distinctly inclined medially; lacking basal foveae, carinae, or sulci, but with well-marked reticulate sculpture at center; humeri broadly rounded, flat, with thin marginal carinae extending from humeral bases to beyond half elytra length; posterolateral margins broadly rounded; with nearly straight posterior margins. Metathoracic wings fully developed.

Mesoventrite short, laterally fully demarcated from metaventrite by oblique carinae; median mesoventral foveae narrowly separated, located anterior to median keel; with pair of small lateral mesoventral foveae and short lateral longitudinal carinae. Metaventrite roundly, broadly convex at middle, descending laterally, with distinct reticulate sculpture on lateral portions; small lateral metaventral foveae present; metaventral intercoxal process broadly separating coxae, weakly convex medially.

Legs short, lacking modifications; tibiae broadened in their apical halves.

Abdomen sub-semicircular, distinctly narrower than elytra, length 0.22–0.24 mm, width 0.45 mm, widest at basolateral margins of composite tergite. Composite tergite (IV–VI) convex medially, with oblique lateral carinae extending from tergal base posterolaterally to approximately 2/5 of tergal length, forming lateral edges of longitudinal cavities; each cavity with basolateral fovea at its anterior end and lateral fovea at its posterior end; tergite 2 (VII) short, greatly transverse, with pair of small basolateral foveae; 3 (VIII) subtrapezoidal, transverse, with small basolateral foveae and broadly concave posterior margin. Sternite 2 (IV) broadly, moderately convex medially; with thin, posteriorly divergent lateral carinae that extend parallel to posterior margin of sternite approximately posterior to basal 1/5; 3–5 (V–VII) of subequal length at middle; each short, transverse, lacking foveae; 6 (VIII) transverse, lacking foveae; presumed sternite 7 (IX), or genital plate (Fig. 1D), of membranous, sub-annular structure that encircles apical part of aedeagus.

Aedeagus (Fig. 1E, F) 0.13 mm long, elongate, dorsoventrally symmetric; median lobe with extensive, basally rounded capsule, transversely oval foramen, and large oval diaphragm; apical 1/4 narrowed into ventrally bent apex; endophallus armature composed of many membranous, spine-like structures mostly in central part; parameres dorsally fused with ventral wall of median lobe; each elongate, slender, moderately expanded at its rounded, asetose apex.

Female. Unknown.

Comparative notes. This species differs from *D. bruneicus* by its straight terminal antennomeres and unmodified male legs, in contrast to the basolaterally curved antennomeres and large ventral spines on the mesofemora of the latter species. From *D. moultoni*, it differs in the much longer antennae relative to head length and the simple mesofemora; the latter species possesses antennae that are distinctly shorter than the head capsule and femora bearing one long and one short ventral spine. Compared to the type species, *D. integer*, the new species has proportionately shorter and more robust terminal antennomeres (antennae much longer than the head and at the bases distinctly narrower than at the apices in *D. integer*). Furthermore, the new species has relatively the smallest male eyes among known congeners, which makes them appear quite "broadly separated."

Natural history. Eight flight intercept traps were deployed in various locations in the mixed evergreen tropical forests surrounding the Xishuangbanna Tropical Botanic Garden. Despite careful stereomicroscopic examination of the material collected over several weeks, this extensive sampling effort yielded only two adult specimens. Such a low recovery rate implies that in mid-May the species either exists at a very low population density or exhibits a high degree of microhabitat specificity, perhaps in association with an as-yet unidentified symbiotic host. A summary of the current knowledge regarding distribution, collecting methods, host associations, and specimen availability for all known *Disarthricerus* species is presented in Table 1.

Distribution. Southwest China: Yunnan (Fig. 3).

Etymology. The epithet is a Latin adjective that means "sweetest, most charming." This name refers to the beetle's charming and delicate appearance.

Disarthricerus integer Raffray, 1895

Figs 2, 3

Disarthricerus integer Raffray, 1895: 78.

Material for SEM. • 1 ♂, 'FIT (NG-4): Base camp, Endau-Rompin Nat. Res. <Pahang, MALAYSIA>, 20–24.vii.2004, S. Nomura / FAUNA MALAYANA, Staphylinidae, Pselaphinae, Disarthricerus integer Raffray, Nomura & Idris, 2005' (NSMT) (same specimen as listed in Nomura 2005).

Table 1. Summarized knowledge of the genus *Disarthricerus*.

Species	Distribution	Collecting method	Host association	Available material	Reference
D. bruneicus Nakládal and Hlaváč	Brunei (Belait)	light trap	unknown	♂ holotype	Nakládal and Hlaváč (2018)
D. dulcissimus sp. nov.	SW China (Yunnan)	flight intercept trap	unknown	♂ holotype + 1 ♂ paratype	present study
D. integer Raffray	Singapore; Malaysia (Pahang)	sifting leaf litter; flight intercept trap	unknown	♀ holotype + 1 ♂	Raffray (1895); Nomura (2005); Nomura and Idris (2005); present study
D. moultoni Bryant	Malaysia (Sarawak, Sabah)	in ant nest; sweeping	*Paraparatrechina butteli* (Forel)	1 ♂, 1 ♀ syntypes + 1 ♂	Bryant (1915); Nomura and Mohamed (2008); Nomura (2012)

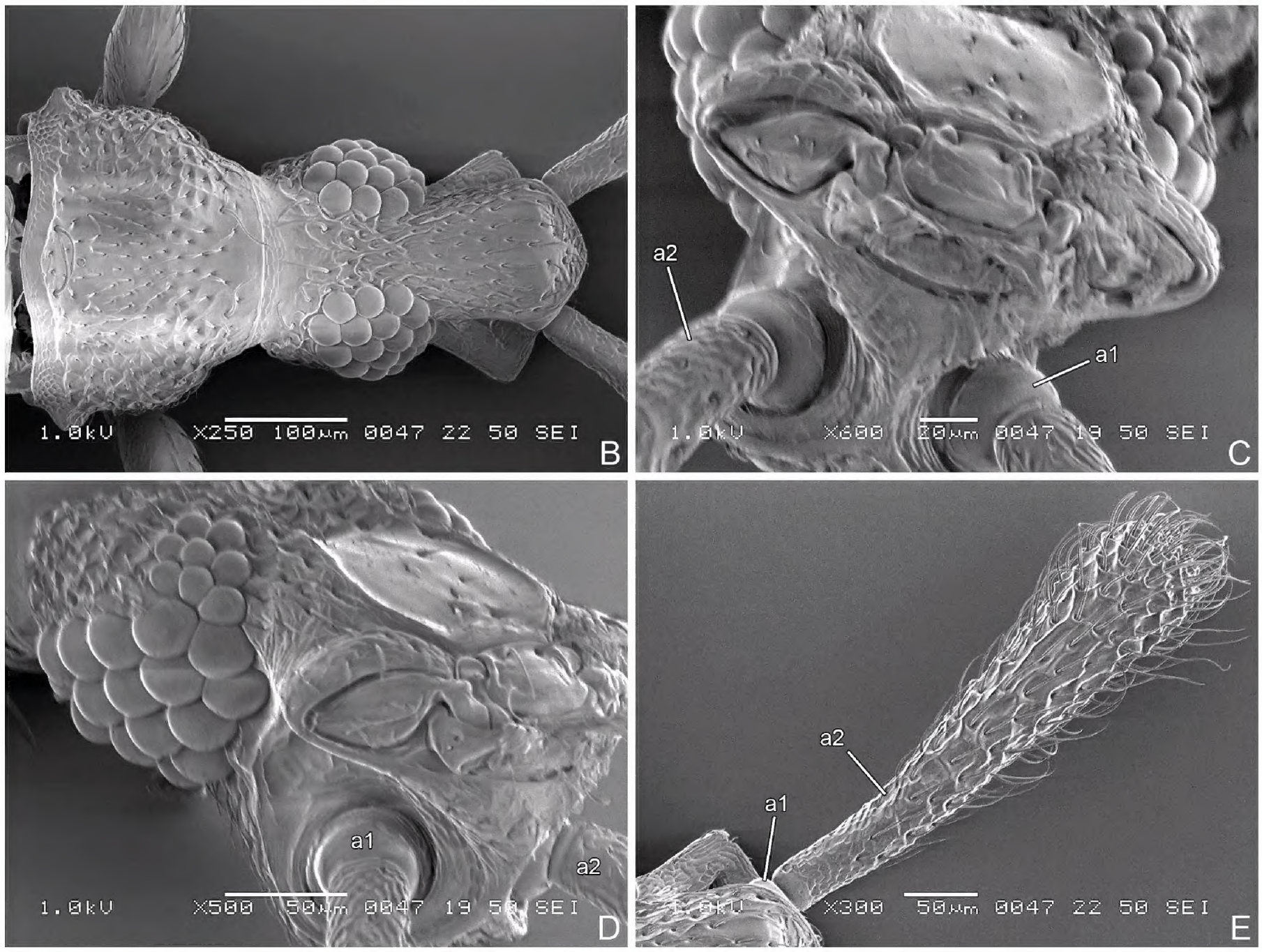

Figure 2. *Disarthricerus integer* Raffray, 1895, male. **A.** Dorsal habitus; **B.** Head dorsum; **C, D.** Ventral (**C**) and ventrolateral (**D**) view of antennal bases; **E.** Left antenna, dorsal; **F, G.** Aedeagus, lateral (**F**) and ventral (**G**). Abbreviations: a1, 2 = antennomere 1, 2. Scale bars: 0.5 mm (**A**); 0.1 mm (**F, G**).

Remarks. Diagnostic features of this species (Fig. 2A) are illustrated for the first time, including the head and pronotum (Fig. 2B), the antennae and their insertions (Fig. 2C–E), and the aedeagus (Fig. 2F, G). Externally, *Disarthricerus integer* most closely resembles *D. bruneicus* but can be distinguished by the nearly straight to shallowly curved terminal antennomeres and a quite different aedeagus (Fig. 2F, G, cf. Nakládal and Hlaváč 2018: figs 5, 6).

Distribution. Singapore; Malaysia (Pahang) (Fig. 3).

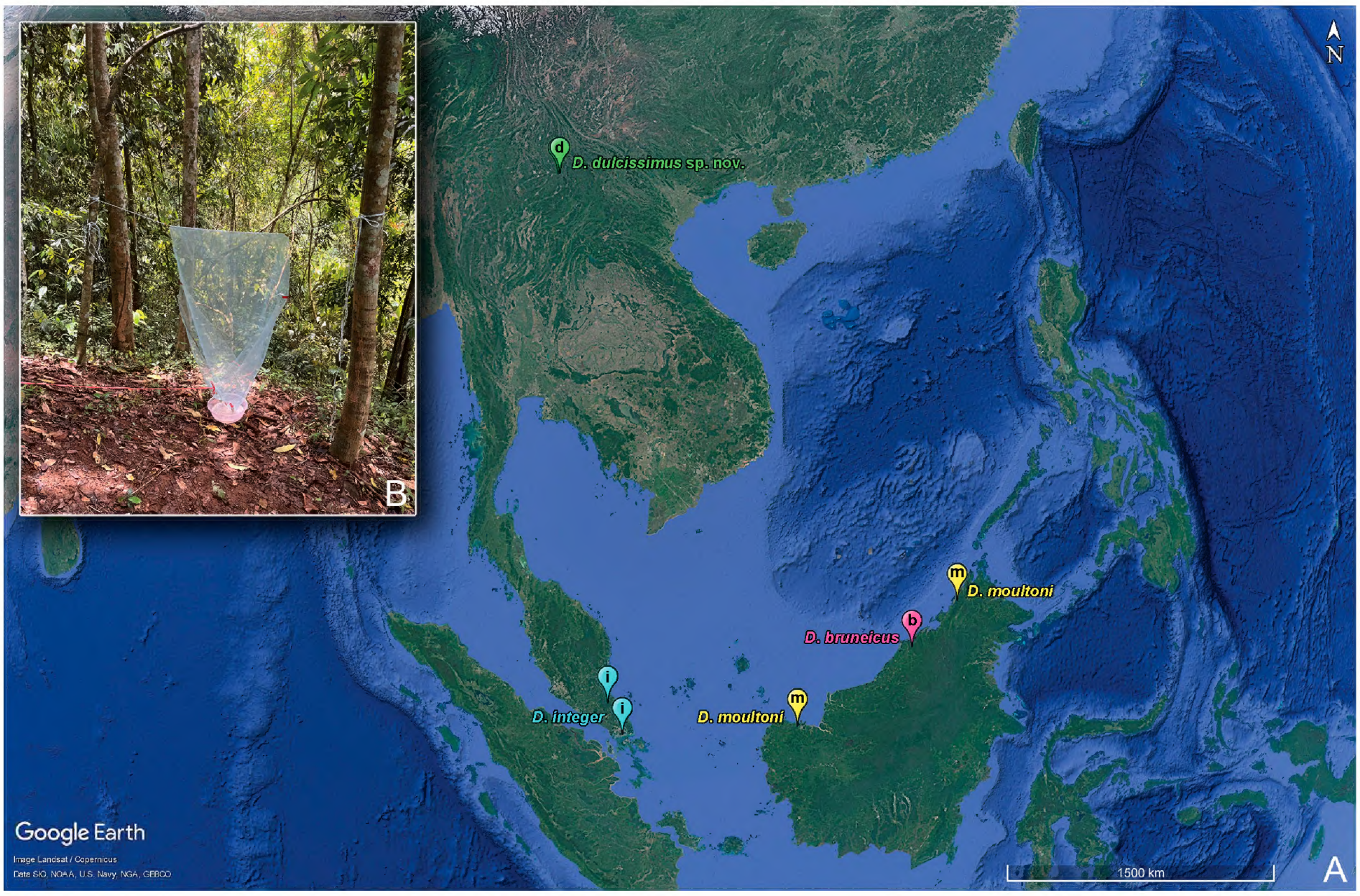

Figure 3. Distribution and habitat of *Disarthricerus* Raffray. **A.** Distribution of *Disarthricerus* species, showing significant range extension following the discovery of the new species in China; **B.** Collecting environment of *D. dulcissimus* sp. nov. A flight intercept trap deployed in an evergreen broad-leaved forest of Mangang Mountain, Yunnan.

Key to species

1 Antennae much shorter than head (Fig. 4B; Bryant 1915: plate XIX, fig. 1, 1a; Nomura 2012: fig. 2A, B) .... *D. moultoni* Bryant

– Antennae distinctly longer than head 2

2 Terminal antennomeres distinctly curved laterally at basal 1/4 (Fig. 4A; Nakládal and Hlaváč 2018: fig. 4)..... ..... *D. bruneicus* Nakládal and Hlaváč

– Terminal antennomeres nearly straight, lacking distinct curvature or only weakly bent near bases 3

3 Eyes relatively much larger, appearing narrowly separated in dorsal view (Fig. 2A, B); antennae relatively much longer in relation to head, and relatively much slender in relation to antennal width (Fig. 2C–E; Nomura 2005: fig. 4L) .... *D. integer* Raffray

– Eyes relatively much smaller, appearing broadly separated in dorsal view (Fig. 1A, B); antennae relatively much shorter in relation to head and relatively much wider in relation to antennal width (Fig. 1A, C)..... *D. dulcissimus* sp. nov.

Discussion

The discovery of *D. dulcissimus* sp. nov. in Yunnan Province, China, represents a remarkable northward range extension for *Disarthricerus* by more than 2,100 kilometers. Previously, the genus was known only from the southern Malay Peninsula and northern Borneo. While this biogeographical disjunction is substantial, it is not without precedent among rare, myrmecophilous clavigerites. A comparable range expansion has been documented for the genus *Archiclaviger* Heller, 1936, which was understood to be a Javan endemic until a new species was discovered in eastern China, bridging a vast geographical divide (Yin et al. 2020). Other recent discoveries, although less pronounced than the present one, have also considerably extended the ranges for various clavigerite genera, including *Diartiger* Sharp, 1883 (Yin and He 2020), *Anaclasiger* Raffray, 1890 (Yin 2023a; Zhang et al. 2025), and *Triartiger* Kubota, 1944 (Yin 2023b; Yin and Du 2024; Yin and Niu 2025). Such patterns suggest that the true distributions of many cryptic Oriental genera of Clavigeritae may be significantly broader than current collection records imply. *Disarthricerus integer* is recorded from both Singapore and Pahang, Malaysia, while *D. moultoni* is known from the states of Sarawak and Sabah in Malaysian Borneo; the

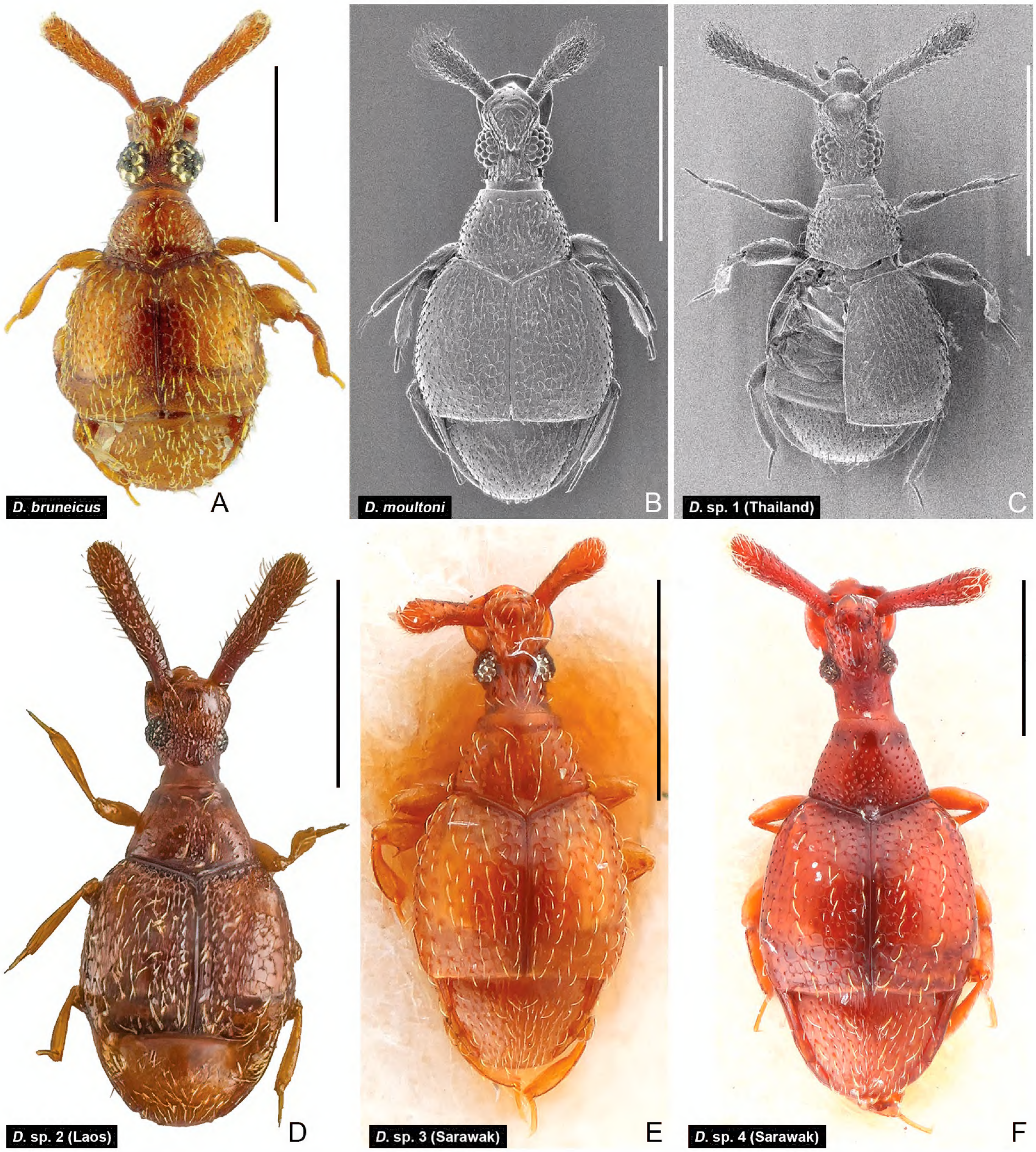

Figure 4. Dorsal habitus of *Disarthricerus* species. **A.** *D. bruneicus* Nakládal & Hlaváč, 2018 (from Nakládal and Hlaváč 2018); **B.** *D. moultoni* Bryant, 1915; **C.** *D.* sp. 1 (Thailand: Nakhon Si Thammarat); **D.** *D.* sp. 2 (Laos: Bolikhamsai); **E, F.** *D.* sp. 3 and *D.* sp. 4 (Malaysia: Sarawak). Scale bars: 0.5 mm.

new species may be similarly more widely distributed across southern China and adjacent regions.

Beyond this significant range extension, our finding indicates that the diversity of *Disarthricerus* is underestimated, and our understanding of their biology remains rudimentary. In addition to the four formally named species, a few more undescribed representatives from southern Thailand (Fig. 4C; material deposited in NSMT), central Laos (Fig. 4D; material deposited in pcPH), and northern Sarawak (Fig. 4E, F; material deposited in MHNG) have been seen from various collections. These unpublished records are of great biogeographical interest. The specimens from Thailand and Laos represent crucial intermediate localities that bridge the extensive geographical gap between the Sundaic and southern Chinese faunas. This strongly suggests that the apparent disjunct distribution of *Disarthricerus* is a sampling artifact rather than a true reflection of its historical range. It is more likely that the genus has a continuous, albeit sparsely populated, distribution across the Indochinese Peninsula, connecting the previously known ranges

in Sundaland with continental Asia. The additional undescribed species from Sarawak further suggest that even in relatively well-explored areas like Malaysian Borneo, the diversity of this genus has not yet been fully cataloged.

A likely explanation for the rarity of species in collections lies in a combination of true scarcity and a high degree of microhabitat specificity. This challenge is compounded by a near-total lack of ecological data. To date, a putative host is known only for *D. moultoni* (Table 1). The collection of *D. bruneicus* at a light trap and *D. dulcissimus* by flight intercept traps, while effective for capturing dispersing adults, severs the connection to their symbiotic hosts. While these passive trapping methods are invaluable for revealing the presence and flight period of these elusive beetles, they yield little information about their bionomics. Future progress in understanding the life history of *Disarthricerus* will therefore depend on targeted, active collecting methods, such as sifting of leaf litter and investigation of ant nests, particularly those of formicine ants related to the known host genus *Paraparatrechina* Donisthorpe, 1947.

Acknowledgments

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